

ABSTRACT

The Snapp Prehistoric Site (7NC-G-101) is a large base camp site located in south central New Castle County, Delaware. Final Phase III data recovery excavations sought to identify the number of prehistoric base camp occupations that may have occurred at the site, and to determine the date and duration of those occupations. The excavations also sought to determine the site's role in regional settlement systems, study the organization of ceramic and lithic technologies during the site's occupation, and collect data on local prehistoric subsistence systems.

The Snapp Site was an attractive locale for intermittent and repeated human settlement for more than 10,000 years as evidenced by the variety of projectile points spanning the period between 8,000 B.C. and A.D. 1500 which were recovered from the site. Prior to ca. 1000 B.C., the occupations were rather ephemeral, but after 3000 B.C., perhaps as late as 1200 B.C., prehistoric groups began to spend more time at the Snapp Site. These later inhabitants built houses with bent saplings as supports for roofs of bark, hides, or rushes. The houses also had interior fireplaces, an excavated "basement" like depression nearly as large as the house itself, and a "sub-basement" storage pit. Storage pits and large outdoor fireplaces that may have been communal resource processing areas are also present. The houses are all relatively small and probably were the domiciles of individual families. In one area of the site it is possible that up to five of these houses were occupied at once. In all other areas of the site, however, the houses seem to be part of individual occupations. At any given time in the past, there was probably only one household living at the site. Lithic and ceramic debris were found in some of the pits inside the houses indicating that the pits were used as refuse receptacles after they were no longer used as storage pits. The occupations probably lasted less than one year, and the presence of interior fireplaces in some of the houses suggests that the occupation spanned the cold-weather months. There is little evidence of change in the way the site was used, and the households who used it, from approximately 1200 B.C. to A.D. 1500.

Ceramic remains found at the site include some of the earliest forms of pottery made in Delaware. These early ceramics were copies of soapstone bowls used by earlier cultures and were often tempered with pieces of soapstone that may have been derived from earlier bowls. The early ceramics are especially interesting because they show signs of experimentation with various tempers and manufacturing techniques not previously seen at other sites. Core and biface reduction comprised the lithic technologies at the Snapp Site and relied heavily on cobbles and pebbles that are present on the site. Projectile points found at the site are sometimes made from materials not readily available in the immediate vicinity of the site, such as argillite and rhyolite, and may have been brought to the site as part of the tool kit transported by prehistoric groups. Other research using data from the site yielded information on the presence of prehistoric blood residues on stone tools, use of varied plant resources by prehistoric groups, the use of cobbles for hot rock boiling of liquids, and estimates of prehistoric regional populations.

Cover Illustration: The cover illustration shows a chipped stone tool known as a biface. Bifaces are chipped on both sides and are often used as knives. This biface was found in Feature 105 of the Snapp Site and dates to ca. A.D. 600 - 1000.